

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Status

1. Claims 1, 7, 8, 14, 16, 21-24 are pending.

Examiner's Amendment

2. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

3. Authorization for an examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Mr. Robert G. Bachner (Reg. 60, 122) on July 17, 2009.

4. **In the claims:**

Claims 1, 8, 16, and 22 have been amended. Please replace all prior claims with the claims below.

1. (Currently Amended) A service retrieval apparatus which provides a retrieval service for retrieving a service provided by a server connected to a network in response to a request from a client and returning a result of the retrieval, the apparatus comprising:
a computer configured to function as:

a retrieval unit that sets a retrieval condition according to the request from the client and performs a first retrieval over the network for at least [[one of]] a print service [[and]] or a scan service based upon the set retrieval condition;

a retrieval result judgment unit that judges whether or not a result of the first retrieval satisfies judgment criteria set in advance; [[and]]

a retrieval result output unit that outputs the result which is judged to satisfy the judgment criteria, wherein judging to satisfy the judgment criteria comprises:

when it is judged that a number of one or more services included in the result of the first retrieval has not reached a lower limit number set as the judgment criteria, the retrieval unit performs a second retrieval that changes a geographic area which is [[to be]] wider in search[[ed to be wider to perform a second retrieval]], the geographic area being an area in which a server providing a service is located, and the retrieval unit performs the second retrieval, wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the retrieval unit retrieves in a second retrieval a second service location included in a second geographic area which is wider in distance and different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval; and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services; and

when it is judged that a number of one or more services included in the result of the first retrieval has exceeded an upper limit number set as the judgment criteria, the retrieval unit performs a second retrieval that changes a geographic area which is [[to be]] narrower in search, the geographic area being an area in which a server providing a service is located, and the retrieval unit performs the second retrieval, wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the retrieval unit retrieves in a second retrieval a second service location included in a second geographic area which is narrower in distance and different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval; and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services.

[[wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the retrieval unit retrieves a second service location included in a second geographic area which is wider and substantially different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval, in the second retrieval; and the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services.]]

7.(Previously presented) The service retrieval apparatus according to claim 1, comprising wherein the computer also is configured to function as a reply unit that rearranges the result of the retrieval based upon values with respect to attribute items included in the retrieval condition, and then returns the result of the retrieval to the client.

8. (Currently Amended) A system including a plurality of service retrieval apparatuses which provide a retrieval service for retrieving a service provided by a server connected to a network in response to a request from a client and returning a result of the retrieval, the system comprising:

a memory storing a service information database of service information including address information and installation position information of the server and attribute information of at least [[one of]] a print service [[and]] or a scan service provided by the server;

a memory storing a service retrieval apparatus database that, when the network is divided into a plurality of sub-networks, the service retrieval apparatus database contains address information and installation position information of a service retrieval apparatus with each sub-network included in a retrieval range;

and a computer configured to function as:

a retrieval range setting unit that, by retrieving the service retrieval apparatus database based upon inputted retrieval conditions, the retrieval range setting unit specifies one or more service retrieval apparatuses conforming to the retrieval conditions and sets sub-networks, which correspond to the specified service retrieval apparatuses, as a retrieval range for the request;

a retrieval unit that executes a first retrieval over the network for a service according to the set retrieval range for the request;

a retrieval result judgment unit that judges whether or not a result of the first retrieval satisfies judgment criteria set in advance; and

a retrieval result output unit that outputs the result which is judged to satisfy the judgment criteria, wherein judging to satisfy the judgment criteria comprises:

when it is judged that a number of one or more services included in the result of the first retrieval does not reach a lower limit number set as the judgment criteria, the retrieval unit performs a second retrieval that changes a geographic area which is [[to be]] wider in search[[ed to be wider to perform a second retrieval]], the geographic area being an area in which a server providing a service is located, and the retrieval unit performs the second retrieval, wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the retrieval unit retrieves a second service location included in a second geographic area, which is wider in distance and different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval, in the second retrieval, and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services; and

when it is judged that a number of one or more services included in the result of the first retrieval has exceeded an upper limit number set as the judgment criteria, the retrieval

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unit performs a second retrieval that changes a geographic area which is [[to be]] narrower in search, the geographic area being an area in which a server providing a service is located, and the retrieval unit performs the second retrieval, wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the retrieval unit retrieves in a second retrieval a second service location included in a second geographic area which is narrower in distance and different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval; and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services.

[[wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the retrieval unit retrieves a second service location included in a second geographic area-area, which is wider and substantially different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval, in the second retrieval, and the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services.]]

9-13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously Presented) The service retrieval apparatuses according to claim 8, comprising

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wherein the computer also is configured to function as a reply unit that rearranges the result of the retrieval based upon values with respect to attribute items included in the retrieval conditions, and then returns the result of the retrieval to said client.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) A service retrieval method, performed by a computer, which retrieves a service provided by a server connected to a network in response to a request from a client and returns a result of the retrieval, the method comprising:

setting a retrieval condition in response to a request of the client;

performing a first retrieval over the network for at least [[one of]] a print service

[[and]]or a scan service based upon the retrieval condition;

judging whether or not a result of the first retrieval satisfies judgment criteria set in advance;

returning the result of the retrieval which is judged to satisfy the judgment criteria to the client; and

wherein judging to satisfy the judgment criteria comprises:

when it is judged that a number of one or more services included in the result of the first retrieval does not reach a lower limit number set as the judgment criteria,

performing a second retrieval that [[changing]] changes a geographic area which is [[to be]] wider in search[[ed to be wider to perform a second retrieval]], the geographic area being an area in which a server providing a service is located, wherein:

the first retrieval retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the second retrieval retrieves a second service location included in a second geographic area, which is wider in distance and different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval, in the second retrieval; and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services; and

when it is judged that a number of one or more services included in the result of the first retrieval exceeds an upper limit set as the judgment criteria, performing a second retrieval that changes a geographic area which is narrower in search, the geographic area being an area in which a server providing a service is located, wherein:

the first retrieval retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the second retrieval retrieves a second service location included in a second geographic area, which is narrower in distance and different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval, in the second retrieval; and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services.

[[and wherein:

the first retrieval retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the second retrieval retrieves a second service location included in a second geographic area, which is wider and substantially different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval, in the second retrieval; and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services.]]

17-20. (Canceled)

21. (Previously Presented) The service retrieval method according to claim 16, further comprising rearranging the result of the retrieval with respect to attribute items included in the retrieval condition, and returning the rearranged result of the retrieval to the client.

22. (Currently Amended) A service retrieval apparatus which provides a retrieval service for retrieving a service provided by a server connected to a network in response to a search request from a client and returning a result of the retrieval, the apparatus comprising:

a computer configured to function as:

a retrieval unit that sets a retrieval condition with respect to a retrieval range according to the search request from the client and performs a first retrieval for at least [[one of]] a print service [[and]]or a scan service based upon the set retrieval condition, the retrieval range indicating a sub-network of the network subjected to the first retrieval;

a retrieval result judgment unit that judges whether or not a result of the first retrieval satisfies judgment criteria set in advance; and

a retrieval result output unit that outputs the result which is judged to satisfy the judgment criteria,

wherein judging to satisfy the judgment criteria comprises:

when it is judged that a number of one or more services included in the result of the first retrieval has not reached a lower limit number set as the judgment criteria, the retrieval unit performs a second retrieval that changes a geographic area which is [[to be]] a wider search[[ed to be wider to perform a second retrieval]], the geographic area being an area in which a server providing a service is located, and the retrieval unit performs the second retrieval, wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the retrieval unit retrieves in a second retrieval a second service location included in a second geographic area which is wider in distance and different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval; and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services; and

when it is judged that a number of one or more services included in the result of the first retrieval has exceeded an upper limit number set as the judgment criteria, the retrieval unit performs a second retrieval that changes a geographic area which is [[to be]]

narrower in search, the geographic area being an area in which a server providing a service is located, and the retrieval unit performs the second retrieval, wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,
the retrieval unit retrieves in a second retrieval a second service location included in a second geographic area which is narrower in distance and different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval; and
the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services.

[[wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the retrieval unit retrieves a second service location included in a second geographic area, which is wider and substantially different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval, in the second retrieval; and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services.]]

23. (Previously presented) The service retrieval apparatus according to claim 22, wherein:
if the search request from the client includes neither the retrieval range nor a retrieval target area, the retrieval unit judges whether or not a service to be retrieved is a service for which a geographical condition is important, and

if the service to be retrieved is the service for which the geographical condition is judged to be important, the retrieval unit sets an area which is geographic vicinity as the retrieval range of the first retrieval.

24. (Previously Presented) The service retrieval apparatus according to claim 22, wherein the retrieval unit defines a circle with latitude and longitude coordinates of its own installation place as a center and a predetermined value as a radius, and retrieves the service whose latitude and longitude coordinates are included inside the circle.

Allowable Subject Matter

5. Claims 1, 7, 8, 14, 16, 21-24 are allowed.

6.. The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter.

With respect to the independent claims, the prior art of record, single or in combination, does not teach or fairly suggest the steps of:

“a retrieval unit that sets a retrieval condition according to the request from the client and performs a first retrieval over the network for at least a print service or a scan service based upon the set retrieval condition;” and

“wherein judging to satisfy the judgment criteria comprises:

when it is judged that a number of one or more services included in the result of the first retrieval has not reached a lower limit number set as the judgment criteria, the retrieval unit performs a second retrieval that changes a geographic area which is wider in search, the geographic area being an area in which a server providing a service is located, and the retrieval unit performs the second retrieval, wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the retrieval unit retrieves in a second retrieval a second service location included in a second geographic area which is wider in distance and different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval; and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services; and

when it is judged that a number of one or more services included in the result of the first retrieval has exceeded an upper limit number set as the judgment criteria, the retrieval unit performs a second retrieval that changes a geographic area which is narrower in search, the geographic area being an area in which a server providing a service is located, and the retrieval unit performs the second retrieval, wherein:

the retrieval unit retrieves a first service location included in a first geographic area in the first retrieval,

the retrieval unit retrieves in a second retrieval a second service location included in a second geographic area which is narrower in distance and different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval; and

the service locations being locations searchable on the network and identifying the services. ", in combination with the other claimed limitations. Independent claims 8, 16, and 22 recite similar limitations.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance".

Contact Information

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to MICHAEL PHAM whose telephone number is (571)272-3924. The examiner can normally be reached on 9am-5pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Cottingham can be reached on 571-272-7079. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

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